

**TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM
MEETING NOTES
October 23, 2002
CORPS OF ENGINEERS NORTHWESTERN DIVISION OFFICES – CUSTOM
HOUSE
PORTLAND, OREGON**

TMT Internet Homepage: <http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/TMT/index.html>

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FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS

Facilitator: Donna Silverberg

The following notes are a summary of issues that are intended to point out future actions or issues that may need further discussion at upcoming meetings. These notes are not intended to be the “record” of the meeting, only a reminder for TMT members.

Report on RSW Meeting in Walla Walla:

Tim Wik reported on preliminary data from the Lower Granite RSW. The RSW seems to have increased passage for fish. A final report is expected out in January 2003.

Proposed Special Operation for Lower Granite RSW:

A request has been made for 6-7 kcfs flow for eight hours a day on November 25, 26 and 27 in order to take hydraulic measurements at Lower Granite. BPA is still working with the COE to agree on an operation. The Salmon Managers are not aware of any fish passage issues. Walla Walla may request approval of this request from TMT.

Hydro Alternatives:

Suzanne Cooper, BPA, distributed an excerpt from the Implementation Plan that lists water management alternatives to hydro system actions as contemplated by the adaptive management focus of the 2000 Biological Opinion. TMT was asked to consider what kind of information they would need to make decisions about whether to maintain flows for chum during low water years. Ron Boyce, Oregon, felt that changes to the Biological Opinion and other operations needed full discussions by TMT and other groups. A suggestion was made to invite the tribal and state folks into the discussions, particularly Spring Creek as there are many Washington state folks involved with that issue. Suzanne clarified that the listed alternatives are just a start and that additional ideas are welcome. A strong need was expressed for clarification on the process: where, when and how are decisions going to be made? How does TMT fit into this process? This is the first time modifications have been offered to the BiOp. outside of formal consultation processes. Clarification is needed on the metrics for measuring biological effects on fish, which may be answered through the SRWG process. Several TMT members are involved with SRWG.

Action: Donna Silverberg and Suzanne Cooper will work with others to develop a process and decision making chart before the next meeting.

2003 Water Management Plan:

The Draft Fall/Winter update has been posted on the TMT web page. Comments are still welcome, and should be in by the next TMT meeting. If there are issues that members would like to see addressed at the meeting, please notify the facilitation team so they may be added to the agenda. There will be a short time for feedback at the next meeting. The COE is still working with their attorneys on the emergency protocols and will update TMT on this issue at the next meeting.

Burbot Modeling Results:

The COE reported their results of model runs relative assuming 86%, 98% and 101% of normal forecast. Preliminary results show that the SOR could be implemented using VARQ or normal flood control without drafting below 2411' on December 31 if the runoff forecast was 86% of normal. Cindy Henriksen, COE, asked the group to consider how future operations may be effected if this SOR is implemented. There will be further data and discussions of this issue at the November TMT meeting.

Action: Dave Wills, USFWS, will consider Cindy's concern. He will respond whether it would be acceptable to USFWS to release extra water out of Libby in January in the event that implementing the burbot operation coupled with high precipitation in January make it necessary to do so.

Next Steps: Scott Bettin, BPA, will present the burbot issue at the next KIVRI group meeting, Friday October 25.

Chum Update:

Shane Scott, Washington, said that WDFW staff are surveying from Gray's River to Bonneville and have not yet seen any chum. Surveys suggest chum travel time from Gray's River to Ive's Island to be approximately a week. Staff expect to see the arrival of chum at Gray's River sometime next week.

Ron Boyce, Oregon, distributed spawning ground surveys for 2000-2002. Washington and Oregon staff are working together on chum surveys and will try to give updates on the information at every TMT meeting. They would like to provide TMT with chum spawning elevations as another tool to use for making operating decisions.

Next Steps: A conference call will be held at 3 pm on Friday, November 1st to review the survey information.

Review Current System Conditions:

Fish Migration: Paul Wagner reported that the Salmon Managers are waiting for chum to arrive!

Reservoir Operations: Cathy Hlebechuk reported that information from the COE gauge at Ive's Island will be posted on the TMT web page as soon as it is available. (Note: Cathy

sent out an email on 10/24 that said that the information should be available around November 1st.)

Tony Norris, BOR, reported that the forebay gauge at Hungry Horse is working again.

CRITFC voiced a concern with Hanford Reach Vernita Bar operations. They plan to send a letter to Grant County regarding fluctuating flows. CRITFC would like to see smoother flows. They would also like BOR to respond to this issue. Tony Norris will get back to Kyle Martin as soon as possible on this issue.

FIELD TRIP/CONFERENCE CALL: An SOR is expected to go out next week requesting 125 at Bonneville when chum are present, presumably around November 5th. There will be a field trip on Friday, November 1st organized by Shane Scott to survey the spawning grounds, and then a TMT conference call will follow at 3 pm to discuss chum operations. TMT will use the regular call-in number. A subsequent meeting the following week may be called. TMT members will be notified of any other scheduled conference calls.

Next Face to Face Meeting, November 6th:

- *Year End Review*
- *Comment on the WMP Fall/Winter Update*
- *Burbot Update*
- *Process Update*
- *Chum Operations*

1. Greeting and Introductions

The October 23 Technical Management Team meeting was chaired by Cathryn Hlebechuk of the Corps and facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The following is a distillation, not a verbatim transcript, of items discussed at the meeting and actions taken. Anyone with questions or comments about these minutes should call Cathy at 503/808-3942.

2. Report on Removable Spillway Weir (RSW) Meeting in Walla Walla.

Tim Wik said that, originally, the Corps had planned to test three different conditions during the 2002 Lower Granite RSW evaluation: the RSW running plus 8 Kcfs training spill, the RSW running plus 16 Kcfs training spill (both 24-hour operations), and the BiOp spill condition, with 40 Kcfs-45 Kcfs of spill for 12 hours at night.

However, because of flow conditions and powerhouse problems, we weren't able to stick very closely to those planned operations, said Wik. We did collect a lot of information, however, and the researchers are in the process of sifting through it. Wik noted that the Corps has released some preliminary information from the 2002 RSW test, but emphasized that it is preliminary and subject to change. The key point is that when the RSW was on, about 60% of the fish passing the project passed through it, Wik said.

The RSW and, in some cases, RSW plus training spill, tended to meet or be lower than the TDG levels allowed for a 24-hour period under the gas cap, he said, adding that when the RSW was on, fish passed throughout the day, while when it was off, forebay residence times tended to be longer.

That pretty much sums up, in a nutshell, what we saw last spring, said Wik. The RSW “off” condition still included BiOp spill at night? Rudd Turner asked. Correct, Wik replied; in addition, there were some days when involuntary spill was occurring. And can you briefly describe the planned evaluation for 2003? asked Shane Scott. I can tell you what I think some aspects might be, Wik replied – we plan to remove the surface bypass collector (SBC) from in front of Units 4, 5 and 6 and to operate the RSW without that powerhouse occlusion in place. As far as the specific operations go, however, we really haven’t worked anything out at this time, said Wik. That will be discussed at a special meeting this week in Walla Walla, noted Ron Boyce.

3. Proposed Lower Granite RSW Special Operation in November.

Wik explained that the Corps is requesting a special operation, three days of 6 Kcfs-7 Kcfs flow through the RSW eight hours per day on November 25-27, to allow personnel at Lower Granite to take hydraulic measurements. This operation will also require a forebay elevation of about 734 feet. Scott Bettin said the details and timing of this operation are still being discussed by the Corps and BPA. In response to a question, Wik said he is unaware of any biological concerns about a November test on the part of the salmon managers. So this is mostly a heads-up, and you’ll provide a further report to TMT as we get a bit closer to the actual test? Silverberg asked. Correct, Bettin replied – we still have a month to work out the final details.

4. Hydro Alternatives.

Bonneville’s Suzanne Cooper provided a presentation on some of the hydrosystem alternatives under consideration by the action agencies; she distributed an excerpt from the 2003 Implementation Plan – Section 5.1, Hydrosystem Priorities. She noted that during the comment period on the draft Implementation Plan, the action agencies hosted a series of public meetings throughout the region to get input from interested parties. Since then, she said, we have added this section to the Plan.

Since the 2000 FCRPS Biological Opinion was issued, Cooper said, there has been ongoing research that has revealed new information about the effectiveness of some of the actions we have been taking. Over the last two months, the action agencies have been working with NMFS and the Fish and Wildlife Service to review configuration, spill and flow operations to see whether new information might indicate that we should modify our implementation of any of these measures, in a way that would sustain or accelerate our progress toward meeting the performance standards, but which could also potentially achieve that progress at a lower cost. We have identified several alternatives, listed in Section 5.1, which the action agencies, NMFS and the Fish and Wildlife Service feel merit further evaluation and discussion by the Regional Forum teams, Cooper explained. These alternatives include:

Configurational Alternatives

The intent of the following options is to improve upon existing project survivals, or provide equivalent survival, while reducing spill levels. As we develop options, and if implemented, we would adaptively address necessary spill/operational requirements with the goal of meeting biological opinion performance objectives.

- Accelerate installation of a Removable Spillway Weir (RSW) and Behavioral Guidance System (BGS) at Ice Harbor Dam
- Accelerate installation of an RSW and BGS at Lower Monumental Dam
- Accelerate installation of a forebay physical guidance device at The Dalles Dam and reduce spill from levels called for in the BiOp.

Water Management Alternatives

- Discontinue spill at Bonneville Dam to assist passage of Spring Creek Hatchery release in March. This alternative may involve reprogramming of hatchery funds or other actions to move fish production to facilities below Bonneville Dam.
- Eliminate daytime spill testing at John Day in the spring. Information to date does not show a survival advantage to 24-hour spill for spring migrants. Review of 2002 research is needed to make a determination.
- Test alternative levels of nighttime spill at John Day Dam in the spring. Survival studies at John Day show no significant difference in tailrace egress for 30% and 60% spill levels. Reduced spill levels may not impact survival and would increase generation. Review of 2002 research results is needed to determine what level of immediate spill may be appropriate for testing.
- Modify spill at Ice Harbor to optimize tailrace egress. Reassessment of spill cap based on tailrace condition (similar to what NMFS developed for other projects) will be considered for the summer passage period, and perhaps the spring. Recent evaluation results suggest survival through nighttime spill in the summer is lower than expected.
- Assess whether operations to maintain flows to benefit chum salmon should be consistently maintained through emergence in low water years. This assessment will also take into account Vernita Bar flows.

The configurational alternatives are being discussed by the System Configuration Team (SCT), Cooper said. The water management alternatives, however, are slated for discussion here at TMT and at the Studies Review Work Group (SRWG). She added that the SRWG will be reviewing all of the relevant data, and all of these alternatives will be discussed at length in that forum.

With respect to the final operational alternative, Boyce asked what flow or runoff conditions the action agencies are considering under which they might terminate a given year's chum operation, and what basis they might use to determine impacts on the chum population. We need to understand those factors before we can make a decision here, Boyce said. The GPS map of redd locations will be important in making that determination, Bettin observed. It's coming, Shane Scott replied. It would obviously be

only low water years, said Paul Wagner; in those years, the chum operation would conflict with the Vernita Bar operation. Obviously low-flow years produce conflicts between many of our operational criteria for various species, Boyce observed.

What will be the process for considering these alternatives? Silverberg asked. Again, the configurational alternatives will be discussed at SCT; we can also brief the TMT on those alternatives if that would be desirable, she said. The spill alternatives will be discussed at SRWG, said Cooper; in the case of the John Day and Ice Harbor alternatives, the agencies have not yet defined what those operations will be because the analysis of the 2002 data is still outstanding. It is likely that, once that data is available, the SRWG will design the 2003 study protocols, Cooper said. After that, my assumption is that any research the SRWG designs will be brought here to TMT, where the specific operations needed to conduct that research will be discussed and refined.

Boyce said that, in his opinion, any change to the operational and configurational guidance laid out in the 2000 FCRPS BiOp merits full consultation, which NMFS should follow in considering such changes. The consultation process is the annual implementation planning process, Wagner replied – this is part of that process. This would not be “changing” the BiOp, added Cooper – it would be considered part of the adaptive management framework of the BiOp. Bear in mind that this is a 10-year Biological Opinion, she said – the intent was that as research indicates that particular actions are more or less effective than anticipated, we would potentially make changes in how we implement actions to meet the performance standards. Still, I’m unclear about the ability of the SRWG or the TMT in determining the effect of these changes on meeting the performance standards on the recovery of the listed stocks, said Boyce -- hence my question about the process for making that decision.

The entire notion of reviewing these alternatives is to assess their effect on survival, Wagner replied – if survival is increased as a result of making one or more of these changes, then that is the path to follow. If there is no benefit, we will not make those changes, he said. My concern is that we have to be consistent, and clearly lay out how we’re going to go about making that determination, said Boyce – these are potentially substantial deviations from the current program.

An extensive discussion of these issues ensued, including the suggestion that tribal representatives need to be fully involved in these discussions. Cooper emphasized that these alternatives are presented for consideration only, and are certainly not carved in stone at this point. It was strongly reiterated that there is a need for a clearer TMT understanding of how, when, where, and under what criteria any changes that impact the basic operational and configurational actions laid out in the 2000 FCRPS BiOp will be made, given the fact that this is the first time modifications have been proposed to the BiOp outside the formal consultation process. Additional clarification is needed on the metrics under which the biological effects of these potential actions will be measured.

The concern, from a big-picture standpoint, is communication, said Scott – rather than just telling the region later, after decisions are made, this is one instance when you really need to bring folks on board before and during the decision-making process. If we’re simply looking over the fence as the federal parties make changes to the actions

called for in the BiOp, that's not going to work, said Scott. And that's the process we want to put in place, Bettin replied.

Ultimately, it was agreed that Cooper will work with Silverberg to develop a flow chart showing how these questions will be answered, and how decisions will ultimately be made, for presentation at the next TMT meeting.

5. 2003 Water Management Plan.

Hlebechuk said the draft fall/winter update to the 2003 Water Management Plan has been posted to the TMT homepage; we are now waiting for any comments you may have, she said. Hlebechuk asked that those comments be received by the next TMT meeting on November 6, so that the update can be finalized, hopefully, at that meeting. Hlebechuk added that Corps legal staff is still reviewing the emergency protocols; she said she will provide an update on that topic at the next TMT meeting as well.

6. Burbot Modeling Results.

Hlebechuk distributed a handout showing the results of several Corps model runs of the propose SOR burbot operation, assuming 86%, 98% and 101% of normal water supply forecasts. She noted that at this point in the season, forecasters are predicting a below-average water supply in the Libby Basin. Hlebechuk added that Scott Bettin will also be presenting this information at Friday's Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI) meeting.

The SOR calls for Libby to release 7.3 Kcfs or less for the period of December 15 through January 31; the project is currently releasing 4.8 Kcfs. According to the Corps' model runs, if we get 86% of average April-August runoff at Libby, if we hit elevation 2411 by December 31, we can provide the 7.3 Kcfs burbot flow from Libby whether or not we implement VARQ or normal flood control, Hlebechuk said. If runoff is 98% of average, reaching elevation 2411 by December 31 works for a VARQ operation, but not for a normal flood control operation, she said – we would need to draft 16 to 20 feet below elevation 2411 by December 31. In other words, said Hlebechuk, if we get a low runoff volume this year, we're in good shape to do the burbot operation. She added that the next Libby forecast will be available November 7; it was agreed that the TMT will discuss the burbot issue further at its November 13 meeting.

Cindy Henriksen asked what might happen if the project is operated to reach elevation 2411 by December 31, but it turns out that the water year is average or above-average? What if we have a wet January, as Kyle Martin is predicting we will, and have to draft the project deeply for flood control, releasing 15 Kcfs-20 Kcfs to meet a new flood control operation? Is that all right with the Fish and Wildlife Service? Henriksen asked. Actually, what I and everyone else are currently predicting is below-normal precipitation in November and December, and an average or below-average water year overall, Martin said. My point is simply that if the forecast changes, we might have to make some hard choices, Henriksen said. Wills replied that he will discuss this issue with others at the Fish and Wildlife Service, and will report back at the next TMT meeting.

7. Chum Update.

Shane Scott reported that although WDFW field personnel have been regularly surveying spawning areas from Grays River to Bonneville Dam, they have yet to see any chum. He noted that it generally takes about a week for the chum to migrate up from Grays River to Ives Island, adding that staff expect the chum to begin arriving at Grays River by next week, and at Ives Island by the first week in November. We'll keep you posted, he said.

Ron Boyce distributed Ives Island chum spawning ground survey information from 1998-2002; this information is available via the Fish Passage Center homepage. A few tule and upriver bright chinook have been observed in the area, he said, but as Shane said, no chum have arrived as yet. Boyce said ODFW and WDFW staff will be working together to develop the 2002 chum spawning surveys in 2002, adding that he will present this information on a weekly basis as it becomes available. After a brief discussion, it was agreed to convene a TMT conference call on Friday, November 1 to discuss the onset of the 2002 chum operation.

8. Current System Conditions.

With respect to fish passage, Wagner said that, basically, the salmon managers are waiting for the chum to arrive. Moving on the reservoir operations, Hlebechuk said the readings from the Corps' Ives Island gauge will be posted to the TMT website as soon as it is available. Tony Norris added that the Hungry Horse forebay gauge is now working again.

Martin expressed CRITFC's concern that smoother Mid-Columbia operations are needed for the Vernita Bar operation; he said CRITFC will be sending a letter to that effect to Grant County PUD. Martin also requested a Reclamation response on this issue. Norris said he will provide that response as soon as possible.

9. New System Operational Requests.

It was noted that the salmon managers will be developing and submitting an SOR covering the 2002 chum operation, probably by next week. This SOR will request a minimum instantaneous flow of 125 Kcfs from Bonneville, and will likely include a minimum tailwater elevation requirement as well. The SOR will request that this operation begin as soon as chum are observed on the spawning grounds at Ives Island, presumably in the first week in November. Scott reminded that group that he is arranging a TMT field trip to the Ives Island area for the morning of November 1; again, there will be a follow-up TMT conference call to discuss the status of the chum operation.

10. Recommended Operations.

Recommended operations were discussed earlier in today's agenda.

11. Next TMT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the Technical Management Team was set for Wednesday, November 6. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.